

British Columbia
Environmental Assessment Office

SERVICE PLAN
2002/2003 – 2004/2005



British Columbia
Environmental Assessment Office

February 2002

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Published by the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office

A New Era of Government Service

Three-year Service Plans represent an important part of the government's commitment to open and accountable government. In August 2001, the government amended the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* to require government to table a three-year Strategic Plan and annual three-year service plans for ministries and government organizations with the provincial budget. These Plans will ensure government and its individual ministries clearly outline their goals, and enable British Columbians to hold government accountable for its decisions and actions.

The government's Three Year Strategic Plan articulates the government's vision: *British Columbia is a prosperous and just province, whose citizens achieve their potential and have confidence in the future.* It also establishes three strategic goals that are key to achieving the government's overall vision:

- A strong and vibrant provincial economy
- A supportive social infrastructure
- Safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment

This Service Plan details the Agency's mission and objectives, which support the government's strategic goals. The Service Plan also includes performance measures that will be used to assess the Agency's progress in achieving its objectives. Agency objectives and performance measures are a new initiative. In some cases, as planning progresses, performance measures will become more detailed as they are further developed.

After the end of each fiscal year, the Agency will prepare a Service Plan Report that will describe actual accomplishments for the year just completed. The Report will include a comparison of planned and actual results, from both a financial and performance measure perspective and allow the public to assess the government's performance.

In the years ahead, Service Plans and Service Plan Reports, prepared by government ministries and organizations, will become the key tool by which government will manage public resources to ensure government programs are contributing, in a measurable way, to key government priorities in an efficient and effective manner.

The government's three-year Strategic Plan and Agency three-year Service Plans will guide the reform of the province's public services so they meet British Columbians' needs. Measures to revitalize economic prosperity and protect and renew public services will lay the groundwork for a future of new opportunity for all British Columbians.

Accountability Statement



**British Columbia
Environmental Assessment Office**

The 2002/03 - 2004/05 British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. The plan was developed in the context of the government's *New Era* commitments which are to be addressed by May 17, 2005. All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 28, 2002 have been considered in preparing the plan and I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.

Honourable Stanley B. Hagen
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management
and Minister Responsible for
the Environmental Assessment Office

February 5, 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A New Era of Government Service	III
Accountability Statement	V
Background	1
A. Strategic Context	2
I. Vision	
II. Mission	
III. Principles and Organizational Values	
IV. Planning Context	
B. Core Business Areas and Goals	4
C. Performance Measures and Targets	5
D. Consistency with Government Strategic Plan	8
E. Resources Expenditure Plan	9
I. Information Resource Management Plan	
II. Human Resources Management Plan	

Background

The Environmental Assessment Office leads reviews of large-scale projects being proposed for development in British Columbia. Environmental assessment is a process for identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating potentially adverse impacts of major projects. The process examines a broad range of possible effects — environmental, economic, social, health and cultural/heritage — and supports balanced decision-making.

Environmental assessment serves the public interest by:

- ensuring that major projects will not threaten public health/safety or adversely affect local communities and the environment, and by instilling public confidence that this is the case;
- supporting sustainable development that improves the provincial economy;
- forestalling project planning errors which could be costly to both private and public interests;
- protecting British Columbia's reputation for environmental integrity in external markets;
- satisfying public expectations for political accountability for decisions made about whether or not major projects are in the overall public interest; and
- ensuring that decisions on major projects are linked to government's larger responsibility for the management of provincial land and resources.

While there are a number of strengths to the current environmental assessment process

— it is thorough, balanced, integrated, open and participatory — there are also significant weaknesses. As a result, in 2002, the Environmental Assessment Office will be undertaking a major reform of the current environmental assessment process in order to implement the following strategic shifts:

- from a prescriptive to an enabling statute that introduces broad flexibility to the process;
- from a pre-occupation with process to an approach that focuses on the specific issues related to the project;
- from a standardized to a customized process, tailoring the process to the specific needs of the project, and minimizing the government's administrative burden;
- from a process providing limited proponent choice to one which increases a proponent's procedural options;
- from uncertainty to much greater certainty regarding the duration and scope of the review;
- from a process that can be costly to government and proponents to a streamlined and cost-effective process;
- from a process that may entail high review agency workloads to one in which those workloads are reduced; and
- from a process prone to overlap with the federal environmental assessment process to a more complementary approach, based on enhanced cooperation to minimize duplication.

A. Strategic Context

I. Vision

Sustainable economic development that reflects the social, cultural and environmental values of British Columbians.

II. Mission

Provide British Columbians with a well-designed and well-delivered environmental assessment process that reflects the government's objectives for economic growth, strong communities and sustainable resource management, based on maintaining high environmental standards.

III. Principles and Organizational Values

Principles

The Environmental Assessment Office is committed to the following principles which guide our work:

Neutrality: the environmental assessment process is neutrally and centrally administered.

Fairness: a fair and open review process.

Balance: issues receive integrated consideration and decisions are based on impartial, balanced and informed recommendations.

Science-based Decision-making: use of the best available knowledge and technology.

Public Consultation: process is participatory and transparent, ensuring meaningful opportunities for public input.

Intergovernmental Cooperation: to minimize duplication and overlap.

Values

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided in its organizational behaviour by the following values:

- cooperation and teamwork;
- respect for the values and opinions of others;
- continuous improvement to ensure quality service;
- a professional and high-performance culture, encouraging innovation and creativity;
- accountability to the people of British Columbia; and
- a healthy workplace supporting staff development, recognition, and opportunity.

IV. Planning Context

Various internal and external factors are expected to influence the ability of the Environmental Assessment Office to achieve its mission, goals and objectives.

1. *Provincial Economy* — Downward trends in prices for, and revenues from, many of British Columbia's natural resources are currently constraining economic growth, although prices for some products (e.g., energy) are expected to increase. Many resource-based communities, particularly those which have experienced workforce dislocations, are anxious for new economic opportunities.
2. *Market Expectations* — Environmental assessment is now an integral component of broader environmental management systems worldwide. Consumer demands for assurances regarding environmental sustainability and consumer health are increasingly affecting both global and domestic markets, and an environmental

assessment approval can be an important marketing and financing asset. British Columbia has a strong reputation for environmental integrity with its external markets, and will need to preserve this in the future.

3. *Potential Project Effects* — Major projects may raise significant health and safety, community and environmental issues with the public. The public will continue to expect opportunities for substantial involvement in environmental assessments, especially for controversial projects. Decision-making will need to be transparent, based on best technical information, and reflective of government's broader objectives for the management of provincial land and resources.
4. *Federal Government's Role* — Some 70% of projects which are subject to the provincial environmental assessment process must also satisfy federal environmental assessment requirements. Over the past decade, federal interpretation of their jurisdiction has resulted in more federal involvement in areas of traditionally provincial resource and land use jurisdiction. This trend is expected to continue with new federal initiatives such as the *Species at Risk Act* and ratification of the Kyoto Accord, as well as with evolving interpretation of and changes to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. An improved framework for cooperation with the federal environmental assessment process must be a priority, since Canada does not endorse any province's review procedure in place of its own.
5. *Increased Regulatory Efficiency* — There is concern that the current regulatory burden on industry is too high, and has hampered sustainable economic development. This is leading to a greater emphasis on delivering services more efficiently and effectively to increase certainty. To achieve this, environmental assessment needs to be better coordinated with land use planning, permitting and tenuring processes. Ongoing challenges are anticipated in providing greater certainty where First Nations land claims are unresolved or provincial land use-planning is incomplete.
6. *Provincial Fiscal Goals* — The provincial government is committed to sound fiscal management, and is reducing its costs and programming responsibilities as part of its overall strategy to balance the budget. Major projects may entail large commitments of government's administrative and technical resources at a time when decreases in internal government financial and human resources are anticipated. Ongoing organizational and procedural adjustments will be required to adapt to current fiscal and resource constraints, and to accommodate future changes in the government's corporate strategic direction.

B. Core Business Areas and Goals

Core Business Areas

The core functions of the Environmental Assessment Office form the basis fulfilling its mandated responsibilities. These core functions are delivered through two business areas:

Major Project Environmental Assessments

The Environmental Assessment Office oversees and manages the province's major project environmental assessment process. The process identifies the potential environmental, economic, social and

other aspects of a proposed project, and determines ways to eliminate, minimize or mitigate any negative impacts.

Corporate Operations

Many of the Environmental Assessment Office's corporate operations are supported by a shared services model, implemented in cooperation with the Ministries of Sustainable Resource Management and Water, Land and Air Protection. The corporate operations provided internally include service planning, budgeting, staff development, policy and legislation, communications, records management, the Project Registry and the website.

GOALS

The Environmental Assessment Office expects to achieve its mission through the realization of two broad goals, briefly described below. Each core business area

is supported by a goal, and by a series of specific objectives and strategies designed to achieve the mission of the Environmental Assessment Office.

Goal 1: Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment

This goal will be met by achieving two objectives — a continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment and increased procedural certainty where both the provincial and federal review processes are triggered.

The highest priority during the planning period will be the re-design of the environmental assessment process, accompanied by new legislation. A strategy will also be developed to ensure a smooth transition for projects in mid-review as the process is reformed.

This goal also supports the government's commitment to implement performance-based environmental standards, and to enhance the alignment between environmental assessment and permitting/licensing.

Since a large majority of proposed major projects trigger both a federal and provincial environmental assessment, initiatives will be undertaken to increase certainty and enhance federal/provincial cooperation to minimize overlap and duplication.

Goal 2: Organizational Excellence

This goal is achieved by ensuring that the Environmental Assessment Office has the organizational capacity to provide efficient and effective delivery of environmental

assessment. It also entails ensuring effective communication with all those involved with environmental assessment.

C. Performance Measures and Targets

Performance measures and targets, outlined below, track the effectiveness of the Environmental Assessment Office's strategies in meeting its goals. The annual Service Plan Report will compare actual performance with the performance measures and targets.

The objectives, strategies and targets outlined in this section are based on the planned expenditures and staffing levels listed in Section E. As noted, the current environmental assessment process will be significantly re-designed in order to

more effectively contribute to the *New Era* commitments and other relevant government direction with respect to the economy, de-regulation, sustainable development and fiscal restraint.

Until the new legislation is drafted, it is difficult to determine with full certainty what the future operating model and organizational structure of the Environmental Assessment Office will be. The Service Plan will be amended as required over this three-year planning period to reflect any operational changes.

GOAL 1	OBJECTIVES
Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment	(1) Continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment. (2) Increased procedural certainty in federal/provincial reviews.

GOAL 2	OBJECTIVES
Organizational Excellence	(1) Adjust organizational capacity to deliver environmental assessment. (2) Communicate effectively with all stakeholders

Goal 1 Efficient and effective delivery of environmental assessment

Objective 1.1	Continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment			
Strategy 1.1.1	Develop a policy framework for provincial environmental assessment program reform.			
Strategy 1.1.2	Implement new legislation to support policy framework in Strategy 1.1.1.			
Strategy 1.1.3	Deliver environmental assessment program and provide transition to the reformed delivery model.			
Strategy 1.1.4	Participate in the development and implementation of government policy relevant to environmental assessment.			
Strategy 1.1.5	Support the development and implementation of performance-based standards and guidelines.			
Strategy 1.1.6	Streamline alignment between environmental assessment and permitting/licensing.			
Strategy 1.1.7	Develop and implement a public and First Nations public consultation program.			
Objective 1.2	Increase certainty in federal/provincial reviews			
Strategy 1.2.1	Develop a new federal/provincial framework for environmental assessment cooperation.			
Strategy 1.2.2	Develop operational processes to accommodate federal requirements.			
Strategy 1.2.3	Develop operational plans with the federal government which outline the respective federal/provincial responsibilities with regard to First Nations.			
Performance Measures	Targets			
	2001/02 Base Data	2002/03 Target	2003/04 Target	2004/05 Target
Success in meeting timelines - percentage of reviews completed on time.	67% to Jan 2002. To be finalized for 2001/02 Annual Service Plan Reporting	80%	90%	95%
Participants' perceptions of a professional, expert, fair and open review process.	In progress. Base data to be provided in 2001/02 Annual Service Plan Reporting	(a) Proponents - Continual improvement (b) Other participants - Maintain or improve	(a) Proponents - Continual improvement (b) Other participants - Maintain or improve	(a) Proponents - Continual improvement (b) Other participants - Maintain or improve
Cost per project under review - average annual government environmental assessment costs.	Estimated to be \$317K. To be finalized for 2001/02 Annual Service Plan Reporting	Maintain	Reduce by 5%	Reduce by 10%
Approved plan for cooperative federal/provincial relationship to guide joint reviews.	In progress	Completed plan	Plan monitored and adjusted, as necessary	Plan monitored and adjusted, as necessary

Goal 2 Organizational excellence

Objective 2.1	Adjust organizational capacity to deliver environmental assessment			
Strategy 2.1.1	Develop an organizational plan to support environmental assessment program reform.			
Strategy 2.1.2	Develop and implement a human resource management plan that includes strategies for fair workforce adjustment, staff training and development, and succession planning.			
Strategy 2.1.3	Refine and implement performance management and budget systems.			
Strategy 2.1.4	Ensure the provision of efficient corporate services through a shared delivery model.			
Objective 2.2	Communicate effectively with all stakeholders			
Strategy 2.2.1	Effectively communicate the environmental assessment program.			
Strategy 2.2.2	Develop and implement an <i>e-Registry</i> that supports a focus on client service.			
Strategy 2.2.3	Increase and improve the content of Internet and Intranet sites.			
Performance Measures	Targets			
	2001/02 Base Data	2002/03 Target	2003/04 Target	2004/05 Target
Organizational development and planning – % of staff performance agreements in place.	In progress.	50%	90%	100%
Switch to electronic documentation – number of Environmental Assessment Office website visits per year.	244,340 to January 2002	Continual improvement (10% increase)	Continual improvement (20% increase)	Continual improvement (30% increase)

D. Consistency with Government Strategic Plan

While no *New Era* commitments refer specifically to environmental assessment, or the Environmental Assessment Office, a reformed environmental assessment process will contribute to the achievement of government commitments for:

- a thriving private sector economy and enhanced competitive business climate;
- cutting red tape and providing faster approvals and greater access to Crown land and resources;
- effective and sustainable use of provincial land and resources;
- a scientifically-based, balanced and principled approach to environmental management;
- protecting human health;
- eliminating federal/provincial overlaps that increase costs, and frustrate economic development;
- improving the regulatory regime and reducing the number of regulations by one-third within three years;
- increased focus on customer service and leadership in electronic government;
- open and accountable government; and
- responsible fiscal management of tax dollars.

E. Resources Expenditure Plan

The table below shows the budgeted resources for the Environmental Assessment Office's two goals.

Operating Expenditures: (\$000)

Goal	2001/02 Restated Estimates	2002/03 Estimates	2003/04 Plan	2004/05 Plan
1. Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment	3,272	3,260	2,825	2,378
2. Organizational Excellence	570	210	To be determined	To be determined
Total	3,842	3,470	2,825	2,378
FTEs	43	35	30	27

Capital Expenditures: (\$000)

Capital Expenditure	2001/02 Restated Estimates	2002/03 Estimates	2003/04 Plan	2004/05 Plan
	198	112	112	62

I. INFORMATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN

An initiative critical to the success of the reformed environmental assessment program will be technology enhancement. The Environmental Assessment Office will rely on the Chief Information Officer for leadership in the area of standards for electronic service delivery, records management, and information privacy and protection.

Currently, the Project Registry is the principal means of providing public access to environmental assessment information.

The primary information management project for the Environmental Assessment Office is to develop and implement an *e-Registry* that supports a focus on client service and leadership in electronic government. The project is considered essential to providing efficient and effective environmental assessment, and to ensuring open government and accountable decision-making. The *e-Registry* will complement or replace existing information management systems to minimize duplication, wherever possible.

II. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Environmental Assessment Office will receive human resource services and assistance from a shared services model. The following objectives will guide the development of our human resources, to ensure that the Environmental Assessment Office has staff with the necessary skills and knowledge, working in a healthy and attractive workplace:

- ensuring fair workforce adjustment;
- ensuring that the organization has the structure, staff resources and performance

and succession plans to achieve its Service Plan;

- acquiring, developing, retaining and sharing critical knowledge and skills;
- recognizing employee contributions and enhancing employee and workplace wellness;
- delivering excellent human resources services and governance;
- supporting diversity; and
- enhancing communications.

